

Cultural Heritage as Resource

(elaboration by Andrew Gryf Paterson, 27.1.2016.v4)

Cultural heritage

includes inherited artefacts, attributes and systems from a particular locale, group or society that are

- * **Passed on from past generations,**
- * **Maintained through actions in the present,**
- * **Given over for the benefit of future generations.**

However,

What is considered valuable or heritage can change over time,

Compete with/between authorities = has different meaning for different stakeholders.

There are three forms of heritage to consider here (as guided by UNESCO):

- **Tangible Culture** (buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, artifacts, art)
- **Intangible Culture** (folklore, traditional ways of doing, language, stories, knowledge)
- **Natural heritage** (ecosystem and biodiversity)

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Since early September 2015, I have been..

→ **Artist-researcher/facilitator residency** at SERDE Interdisciplinary Art Centre, cultural NGO based in Aizpute, 40mins – 1hr from Liepāja (~50km away)

www.serde.lv

www.visitaizpute.lv

Inter-disciplinary art group **SERDE's work and activity has been largely inspired by, and based upon** these different aspects of cultural heritage mentioned – **Tangible, Intangible**

– and has **included collaborations to explore human inter-relations with local plant-environment and biodiversity.**

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The following paragraphs give examples.

The site of **SERDE's art and residency centre is one of the oldest wooden buildings in Aizpute (18th C.),** and has been **restored since 2002** by SERDE as both **practical and pedagogical work** in traditional construction methods.

This work alone was recently recognised as a **significant contribution to regional tangible cultural heritage.** In September 2015 their centre building complex gained national protected building status (on European Heritage Days).

One of the first material installations they made in the town in the early years was an outdoor kiln for firing ceramics, according to local tradition.

Since 2007 - hosted an iron-casting symposium gathering local and international sculptors, metal-workers.

They have developed **physical infrastructure** and **workshops for making artefacts and art objects – wood, metal, ceramic** – have developed in hand with the practice and enabling traditions of making and doing, inviting younger and established artists and makers get involved. Residency centre active in summer season (May-September) hosting residents, hybrid artist-craftspersons.

Further, the ways of doing of local people and regional ethnic communities, including **narratives of human experiences** have been documented in **artist-led ethnographic expeditions** and **published in the Tradīciju Burtnīca (Exercise/Notebooks of Traditions)** publication series.

To give examples of maker and project developments, the earliest publication *Brandava gatavošana Viduskurzemē* [**Kandža/Moonshine/vodka making in Central Kurzeme**] and **related public demonstrations led towards a national innovation award in intangible cultural heritage in 2007.**

This work inspired a **practice-led investigation into micro-brewing with local producers** (*Alus gatavošana* [Beer brewing], 2009), and the development of new workshop facilities, and hosting gatherings of regional micro-brewers.

Another publication, *Vācēju kultūra Viduskurzemē* / **Foraging in Central Kurzeme (2010)**, **documented the use of local plants and fungi** in the region, **reflecting the human value of the biodiversity in the region still appreciated by some residents.**

This led to the **ongoing artistic-research projects ..**

Especially in the Frontiers in Retreat programme framework <www.frontiersinretreat.org>

HIAP-led '**Frontiers in Retreat**' programme including partners ..

SERDE (LV), Jutempus (LT), Skaffell Centre for Visual Art (IS), Mustarinda (FI), Centre d'Art i Natura (CAT), Scottish Sculpture Workshop (SCO), Cultural Front Grad (RS)

which promotes the

"Necessity of multi-disciplinary approaches to the current ecological concerns and aims to develop means and platforms for this through methods of contemporary art".

1 Ha Aronia Melanocarpa Power Plantation (2011-)

by **Bartaku, in collaboration with SERDE and (harvested) Aronia berries** and processed them into liquids (wine, beer, syrup) and foods (candy, jam) according to traditional and experimental methods or recipes; but has also inspired an experimental musical overture presented in Riga Capital of Culture 2014 programme.

In January 2016, it was announced that **SERDE had been accredited by UNESCO as an advisory NGO** for Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage, the only NGO from the Baltic States to do so.

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These processes encourage the idea that cultural heritage can be

*** not only an inspiration,**

*** but a source of both tangible and intangible material**

*** as well as a knowledge-resource for artistic works or artist-led or grassroots investigations.**

Artists, craftpersons, makers, and cultural workers can contribute

in the **innovative re-valuing of cultural (tangible, intangible, natural) heritage,**

by **developing alternative or new ways of developing, sharing and communicating** heritage,

including **new formats** such as **participatory and informal or recreational learning** workshops.

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In doing so,

Nourishing / Giving and Taking Caring for

collaboration between **artists, cultural associations with other researchers, professionals, small-scale entrepreneurs,**

as well as

ennobles local residents and citizens who hold and maintain traditional knowledge and ways of doing.

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Resources

are understood here in these given examples as

Materials, services, skills, energy, talent, ability, knowledge or other assets,

which are **utilized to support and produce benefit,**

not only to individuals and associations,

but larger communities such as municipalities, regions or wider groups of people. **Common-good.**

Culture developed from some abundance or surplus in the society or environment (Engels)

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A wider interpretation of cultural heritage as resource,

going beyond the tangible and intangible,

Takes into consideration natural heritage (ecosystems and biodiversity)

which includes aspects of..

*** Biotic (living things that make up an ecosystem)**

*** Abiotic (non-living factors, eg. water, light, radiation, temperature, humidity, atmosphere, soil, stone)**

The inter-relationships and -dependences of these resources is also the conditions of life

*** that we inherited from those who have come before us,**

*** that we maintain (or not),**

***and that we pass on to those who will follow us in the future.**

Resources can be classified as

Renewable (replenishing)

or alternatively Non-renewable (finite, depleting, loss-y),

But are often defined

only from the perspective of **whether they renew themselves in a time-spans meaningful to humans,**

rather than to non-humans.

Infact this human-centric perspective

can lead / has led to selfish and negative behaviours

which are criticised as

'resource-hungry' or '**resource-grabbing**', creating resource shortages.

There may be **actual and potential resources existing at different times,**

and as well as those that have been **displaced from one ecosystem, culture or community** for various reasons.

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Cultural heritage focuses our attention

On the **care and concern for the material and immaterial things that humans share** in our environment,

and the **passing on of life-ways.**

It is sensitive to the **sustainability of cultures and practices of value over longer durations of time.**

Conservation and stewardship provide ethics of responsible planning and management of resources,

accepting or assigning responsibility to shepherd and safeguard the valuables of others.

There is what Simon Thurley describes as a **Heritage Cycle** (2005),

which gives an indication of how we can make the past part of our future:

“

By understanding (cultural heritage), people value it;

By valuing it, people want to care for it;

By caring for it, it will help people enjoy it;

From enjoying it, comes a thirst to understand;

By understanding it..”

and so it goes round.

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Artists, makers, cultural producers and interdisciplinary practitioners or researchers

can learn from this due attention and cyclical care and concern,

imagining where to enter the cycle.

Likewise the cultural heritage field

can learn from the intuitive, critical and experimental ways of investigating, communicating & presenting

cultural heritage.

Together we can consider

an expanded notion of resources to include the biotic and abiotic environments that we live within

as inter-related and inter-dependent with our tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

All are under affected by an **age of crises:**

ecological in the case of climate change or breakdown,

but also the **social and economic disruptions and displacements that create, repair and accompany it.**

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Reference

Simon Thurley, Into the future. Our strategy for 2005-2010. In: *Conservation Bulletin* [English Heritage], 2005 (49).